SURVIVAL SKILLS FOR STUDENTS

Do you see STUMBLING BLOCKS or STEPPING-STONES?

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS
School of Medicine
HOW ARE YOU COPING?

Everyone experiences bad times and dealing with life's challenges can be a struggle. It's easy to become stressed, overwhelmed and resort to unhealthy coping mechanisms e.g. alcohol or avoiding the problem. The lucky few, who 'bounce back' and move on appear to be more resilient but anyone can improve their coping abilities to help them become stronger and get through life's ups and downs.

TACTICS FOR TOUGH TIMES

You cannot control everything that happens to you but you can control how you respond. How you think, feel and act when facing a problem can have a major impact not only on the outcome but also on your health and wellbeing. Being able to see something positive in a difficult situation is an important step forward. If the situation cannot be changed, you should try to be flexible and find healthy ways to minimise the impact it is having on your life. Tough times can be an opportunity to change a negative situation, learn valuable new skills, engage with your support networks and become better at tackling future challenges.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

There are some key areas, which you can work on to help strengthen your coping abilities. By just focusing on one, you may make a difference!

Take care of yourself

It is essential to have a healthy diet, good sleep and regular exercise. Being at your fittest increases your energy levels and gives you the added strength needed to deal with problems. There is a direct correlation between physical exercise and resilience and regular exercise makes you feel happier and healthier.

Be optimistic

Keep a positive view of yourself, focus on your strengths and have confidence in your abilities. Believe that there is something you can do to make things better and don't think of yourself as a victim but as a survivor. The way you choose to view your world is the way your world will be. Visualising a positive outcome will give you something better to aim for.

Be self-aware

Be aware of how you perceive the problem and try to understand your role in the situation. You will be able to manage the problem more effectively if you know what you are feeling and why. Recognising and managing how you think, feel and act is an important step towards dealing with the problem and finding a healthy way of coping.

Find Meaning in Life

If you have strong religious beliefs you may find strength and guidance from your faith. If you are not spiritual or religious, you can still find purpose in life by looking for opportunities of self-discovery when dealing with difficult issues. Try to put the situation into perspective by looking at the circumstances in a broader context.

Develop strong problem solving skills

Determine what is causing the problem and look at the small positive things you can do to work your way through it. Tackle the problem step by step and aim for a successful solution. If you don't know what to do, seek advice to help you make more informed decisions.

Maintain good personal relationships

Keep strong connections with family and friends. People who know you well may be able to help you find solutions or just be there for you to off-load your fears and emotions. Use their support to help you through difficult times.

Build a good social network

Make time to relax and do things you enjoy with other people. Try to find leisure activities based on your interests or get involved with helping community groups or faith-based organisations. Having a good social network will occupy you in a meaningful way and distract you from dwelling on problems.

Set Goals

Set realistic goals and work towards them. Having something good to aim for will give you a sense of control and make you feel more positive about the future. Achieving goals will improve your confidence.

Be flexible

Accept that change is a part of life that cannot be avoided. Focus on what you can do to manage it by staying open minded and being willing to adapt to make the best of opportunities.

Ask for help

Don't be afraid to ask for help. An important part of resilience is to know when the problem is too complex to manage alone and finding out where help is available.

TIPS FOR GETTING BACK ON TRACK

1. Aim for better health
2. Exercise regularly
3. Stay connected to family and friends
4. Have a hopeful outlook
5. Don't take things personally
6. Try to manage strong feelings or impulses
7. Believe in yourself; develop a sense of independence and self-worth
8. Be pro-active and take control
9. Learn to embrace change
10. Don't give up; keep working on your coping skills

GETTING HELP…

Outside help

The Samaritans  www.samaritans.org.uk
Rethink (Mental health for young adults)  www.rethink.org
Mind Online (Mental Health Information)  www.mind.org.uk
Students against Depression  www.studentsagainstdepression.org
British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy  www.bacp.co.uk

Self-help Websites

The Panic Center  www.paniccenter.net
Moodjuice  www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/index.html
Student Survivor  www.studentsurvivor.org.uk
Get Self Help  www.getselfhelp.co.uk
Wellbeing podcasts  www.mentalhealth.org.uk
Living life to the full  www.llttf.com
Being Happy  www.actionforhappiness.co.uk

If you need to talk…

Emergency numbers:

LUU Nightline  0113 380 1381
The Samaritans  08457 90 90 90